

Rep. Fred Jarrett

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

2004 Session Report

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
OLYMPIA WA
PERMIT NO 92

Rep. Jarrett and Senator Horn will
hosting a series of town hall meetings
February 14:

9:30-11am • Newcastle City Hall
13020 SE 72nd Place

1-2:30pm • Bellevue City Hall
11511 Main Street

3:30-5pm • Mercer Island City Hall
9611 SE 36th Street

Rep. Jarrett will also be hosting a
series of town hall meetings Feb. 21:

9:30 - 11am • Newcastle City Hall

1-2:30pm • Bellevue City Hall

3:30-5pm • Mercer Island City Hall

Budgeting for Results

The Legislature must follow sound fiscal principles when deliberating the 2004 supplemental budget. In order to avoid a negative 'bow-wave' reaction that would occur if the budget overspends, the Legislature must ensure that the state ends this biennium with an operating budget that is sustainable. The Legislature must continue to rethink how it makes budget decisions focusing on what it should **buy** with taxpayer dollars, not what it should **spend**. In other words, the state's goals and priorities should be used as the Legislature's guiding principles in its purchasing decisions. If we can adhere to this method of budgeting we'll begin to see results. In short, we must focus on results and on healing the economy.

2004 Mailing Restrictions

I'll make every attempt to keep you informed on the issues mentioned in this newsletter and others that come before the 2004 Legislature. Unfortunately, due to election-year mailing restrictions, my ability to communicate with the people we represent is severely limited.

I am, however, allowed to respond to **ALL** specific, written requests from the citizens of the 41st District. If you would like to be updated on the happenings in the Legislature, please send a letter or an e-mail to my office regarding your interest and I'll be happy to provide you with the information you need.



Representative Fred Jarrett

Olympia Office:
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Phone:
360-786-7894

E-mail:
jarrett_fr@leg.wa.gov

Toll-Free Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

TDD (Hearing Impaired):
1-800-635-9993

**Legislative Info
on the Internet:**
<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov>
<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/jarrett.htm>

2004 Session Report

February 2004

Dear Neighbors:

The Legislature began its work January 12, and the scheduled 60-day session will be fast-paced and intense. We will be working on a lot of interesting issues this session. We will continue to work on restoring our state's economy and putting people back to work. Education, both K-12 and higher ed, is an important focus for the Legislature as well. I will be working to find alternative sources of funding for education to ensure Washington students continue to receive the quality education they deserve.

During the even numbered years, the Legislature makes minor corrections to the biennial budget to account for unanticipated spending such as higher increases in school enrollment, flooding or forest fires.

I believe the Legislature must focus on healing the economy and budgeting for results. We struggled during the 2003 session to close a \$2.7 billion budget deficit without increasing general taxes. We can't move away from this approach at a time when we are just beginning to see an improvement in our state's economic situation. If we do, we risk having to face an increase in taxes and deep cuts in services for the people who truly need government assistance again. We must adopt a responsible, sustainable budget that protects taxpayers.

This newsletter will provide you with information on the issues we'll be working on this session and includes important contact information so that you may reach me in Olympia. Remember, I am here to represent your views.

If you have questions or concerns about the issues I am working on, please give me a call, or write to me. I'm always glad to hear from you, and welcome your thoughts and ideas.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your state Representative.

Sincerely,

Representative Fred Jarrett

Rep. Fred Jarrett • 2004 Session Report

Replacing our primary voting system

While we tend to think Washington and California are miles apart in thinking, we did have the blanket primary system in common. The blanket primary allows voters to vote for any candidate on the ballot, regardless of party affiliation. Several years ago the U.S. Supreme Court found California's blanket primary system, which was based on Washington's primary system, violated its state parties' constitutional right of free association. As a result, Washington's Democrat and Republican party officials sued the state, claiming our blanket primary also violated the Constitution. The case has been in the courts for several years and is on appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Since we don't know if the Court will hear the appeal, the Legislature will be debating the issue this session. There are two options under consideration if the blanket primary is held unconstitutional:

- **Modified blanket primary:** would maintain the right of voters to vote for any candidate on the ballot regardless of party and then permit the top two candidates to move to the general election regardless of their party affiliation. This means there could be two members of the same party running against each other during the general election.
- **Open primary:** would limit voters to a ballot listing candidates from one party only and permit the top vote-getters on each party ballot to move forward.
A voter's choice of ballot would either be recorded (the "public" version) or not recorded (the "private" version).

Providing relief from skyrocketing insurance rates

Many people think of tort reform in terms of the medical industry. And it's no wonder: escalating medical malpractice premiums are forcing many health care providers to close their doors. But the same holds true for almost every other industry. Employers everywhere are **struggling to pay skyrocketing premiums** to protect themselves against lawsuits. Our state is facing a crisis as more professionals and businesses cannot purchase insurance policies protecting them from liability awards. Doctors in many specialties like neurosurgery or OB-GYN are being priced out of their careers, and many builders have stopped construction of condos.

Liability insurance is a complex product with little public information available to really understand the cause of premium growth and what changes would improve the system's performance or control insurance rates.

Because this is such a complex issue, it will be difficult to accomplish all that we'd like during a "short session."

I'm committed to finding meaningful solutions to our liability crisis. However, I don't intend to vote for a "solution" which does not promise improvement. I believe we must first identify what caused our system to break before we try to fix it. I'm optimistic we will make progress this session, but I believe it will be more in the form of understanding the problem and then move forward in a deliberative and thoughtful manner to create solutions – not sound bites.

Educational excellence for Washington students

Residents of the 41st District have reason to be proud of their schools. Teachers, administrators and parents have all worked together to create an outstanding learning environment for our children. As a parent, former school board member and a member of the House Higher Education Committee, education issues are always a top priority. I've highlighted a few of the issues I'll be working on in the coming months.

Opportunity school is the new buzz word being used for charter schools this session. They would provide more flexibility to operate mission-driven schools in exchange for increased accountability. They could be a viable option for at-risk kids who struggle in a traditional setting to succeed. When students are given a chance in the right environment with increased opportunities, accountability and parent involvement of the kind that opportunity schools provide, avoiding teachers' strikes, success follows.

The recent Marysville **teachers' strike** was a vivid reminder of how difficult it is on the entire community when teachers are on strike. There will be several proposals this session dealing with the issue of teachers' strikes. The most controversial will likely be Rep. Hans Dunshee's proposal to implement binding arbitration for teachers' strikes. It would require education associations and school districts to submit their best offers to an arbitrator who would write and implement a settlement. Other ideas include clarifying the illegality of teacher strikes or proposing negotiating sessions between the districts and associations be open to the public.

Exploring innovative performance contracts for higher education

Our state's outstanding system of higher education is struggling with insufficient resources, increasing demand and rising competition. We need to rethink our goals for Washington's higher education system and translate those goals into a master plan. Ultimately we need to ensure students are completing their education in a timely manner in the most cost-effective manner possible.

Currently there is no mechanism that calls for consistent statewide goals and objectives for Washington's higher education system. As a result, I worked with several lawmakers, higher education officials and experts throughout Washington and together we identified the need for performance contracts.

Last session the Legislature adopted a bill I sponsored with Reps. Skip Priest and Don Cox to examine opportunities to create performance contracts between the state and institutions of higher education. Over the past several months a work group studied the experiences of other states; considered the feasibility of implementing performance contracts in Washington; identified whether amendments to laws may be necessary to implement performance contracts; and developed guidelines and possible models for performance contracts to be used in Washington.

As a result, legislation has been introduced which would provide for a comprehensive and disciplined approach to funding our state's higher education system. It would combine institutional flexibility and provide authority to make decisions at the local level with accountability for achieving statewide goals. It's also likely we will provide some additional funding for enrollments in our colleges and universities, especially in high-cost degrees like nursing and engineering.